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# THE CLASSICAL JOURNAL

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## Editorial

### THE GREATEST GOOD TO THE GREATEST NUMBER

In an association like our own, made up of scholars and teachers of many different grades and attainments, it must always be difficult both for our program-makers and for the editors of the *Journal* to preserve a nice balance in the character of articles to be offered to our hearers and readers. To some, no article is of value unless it is plainly and immediately applicable to classroom use; to others, an article is anathema if it savors of the pedagogical. Of course, neither of these attitudes is correct. The young and ill-prepared teacher rightly seeks practical assistance for his daily work; but unless he has a lively interest in studies also and points of view which are quite outside his daily routine, he is destined to become a mere drill-master, with no horizon beyond his classroom walls. On the other hand, the man of riper scholarship cannot afford to ignore the practical problems of the schools, both because from his point of vantage he ought to be contributing to the solution of these, and because no college teacher can afford to be ignorant of the conditions which have made and are making the students who from year to year are coming under his instruction.

Assuming the untenability of both the positions mentioned above, we still find much that may be said in criticism of our classical papers and articles. A valued friend of the *Journal* and frequent attendant at our annual meetings sends us the following contribution along this line to which we are glad to give space. His point is good: destructive criticism helps no one unless it is followed

by helpful constructive suggestions; and secondly, there is no objection to being practical if only one *is* practical.

"I have for many years regretted the common tendency of writers on classical teaching toward destructive criticism and toward suggestions so vague and hard to grasp as to make them of practically no value as constructive criticism. The content of many of the articles offered to classical teachers in recent years is such as to make it not simply desirable, but imperative, that the criticisms be followed by specific instructions for the betterment of the ills described. Anyone who has had summer-school students who are teachers knows how lacking they often are in training, and yet how very ready to welcome helpful suggestions. In our four or five hundred colleges in this country, there are certainly many of the less well-equipped teachers, and teachers remote from libraries of size or from sources of helpful information. To such as these the vagueness of such articles as I have mentioned must seem baffling, a rock of offense; and I venture to say they probably seem much the same to many of the better-equipped teachers who happen not to have the point of view of the writers. They make me think of a physician who might tell a patient, 'You are suffering with such and such an ailment,' and then dismiss the patient without an intelligible prescription. Are we not too prone to talk in -isms, humanism, humanitarianism, and the rest, when to most of us these words are beautifully vague in the application we are supposed to make of them?"